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FOR NEA/ARP

E.O. 12958: DECL: 01/20/2018

TAGS: [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [YM](#)

SUBJECT: AL-QIRBI BEMOANS GAZA VIOLENCE

Classified By: Ambassador Stephen A. Seche for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d)

¶1. (U) In a January 21 meeting with the Ambassadors of the United States and Germany and the Japanese DCM, Foreign Minister AbuBakr al-Qirbi broached the subject of the Israeli blockade of the Gaza strip. Diverging from the topic of the meeting, the 2007 Forum for the Future (septel), the Foreign Minister asked his guests if they had been following the news coming out of Gaza and expressed his dismay at recent Israeli actions. "The punishing of the entire population of Gaza is unacceptable," he said. He added that Israeli actions were "providing fuel for extremists." He went on to express fears about the impact of the event on the Annapolis peace process.

"This situation will give those who oppose the peace process ammunition when they argue that the process was just talk," he said.

¶2. (C) The Ambassador noted the Palestinian missile attacks that instigated the recent Israeli action and said "the return to tit-for-tat attacks is the last thing the Annapolis Process needs." The German Ambassador concurred, saying that such violence could "destroy the peace process."

COMMENT

¶3. (C) Foreign Minister al-Qirbi is normally well-focused and doesn't often indulge in unrelated asides in meetings. While his comments appeared to genuinely reflect his views on the issue, post suspects they were motivated as much by a desire to change the subject in a somewhat confrontational meeting as by a sudden desire to lobby for the Palestinian cause.

End Comment.

SECHE